CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

October 2025

COUNCILLOR WENDY FREDERICKS - CABINET MEMBER FOR PEOPLE SERVICES
For the period up to 31st October 2025

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Benefits

IRRV Performance Awards – Benefits Team of the Year (District) 2025

We are delighted to congratulate our Benefits Team, which was announced as the **'Benefits and/or Welfare Reform Team of the Year (District) 2025'**.

The team received the award at the **2025 IRRV Performance Awards** on 2 October, in recognition of their innovation, engagement, and compassion in delivering services to vulnerable households.

This accolade is a well deserved acknowledgement of the team's dedication and the positive impact their work has on some of the most vulnerable residents in our community.

Congratulations to all members of the team on this outstanding achievement.

Caseload (October)

During October, the Council's overall caseload decreased by 32 cases compared to the previous month. The reduction in Housing Benefit claims reflects the ongoing migration of working-age households to Universal Credit, with all households expected to have migrated by December 2025.

The number of households receiving Council Tax Support (CTS) can fluctuate over time. The Council undertakes targeted take-up campaigns to encourage eligible households to apply, helping to maximise income and ensure that residents receive the financial support to which they are entitled.

Alongside this, targeted reviews are conducted to identify and correct instances of fraud and error within the system, which can result in the removal of ineligible claims. Additionally, natural changes in household circumstances can lead to some residents no longer qualifying for support.

Caseload data for the period is presented in the table below.

	September	October	Difference
Housing Benefit only	272	265	-7
Housing Benefit & Council Tax Support	2,103	2,054	-49
Council Tax Support	4,683	4,707	24
Total number of cases	**7,058**	**7,026**	**-32**

Workloads and Speed of Processing Times (October)

The table below presents the Council's processing times for October. The target is **16 days** for processing new claims and **10 days** for processing changes in circumstances.

The service continues to prioritise the processing of changes that affect Housing Benefit to minimise overpayments. This approach helps to reduce the financial impact on customers, prevent potential losses in Housing Benefit subsidy, and avoid the need for costly recovery action.

In October, the team experienced a higher volume of new claims and changes in circumstances compared with the previous month. Speed of Processing performance for Housing Benefit claims declined slightly, while performance for Council Tax Support new claims improved. The reduction in performance for changes in circumstances is primarily attributable to increased workloads and lower staffing levels during the month.

	Number received in October	NNDC number of days to process (October)
New claims HB	163	8.0
New claims CTS		8.4
Changes in circumstances HB	7,314	16.3
Changes in circumstances CTS		12.8

Department for Works and Pension (DWP) Speed of Processing reported benchmarking (Q4 2024/25)

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has published the national Speed of Processing performance data for Quarter 4 of 2024/25, as illustrated below.

Under the benchmarked data, the Council continues to demonstrate strong performance in the processing of new claims, ranking as the highest-performing authority across Norfolk and remaining well above the national average.

Performance in processing changes in circumstances remained slightly below the national average. However, the Council continues to perform positively in this area, achieving the third-fastest processing time in Norfolk, alongside King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council.

		New Claims	Changes in Circumstance
Quarter 4	Breckland	10	2
	Broadland	38	9
	Great Yarmouth	12	3
	King's Lynn and West Norfolk	13	4
	North Norfolk	7	4
	Norwich	23	3
	South Norfolk	23	6
	National Average	20	3

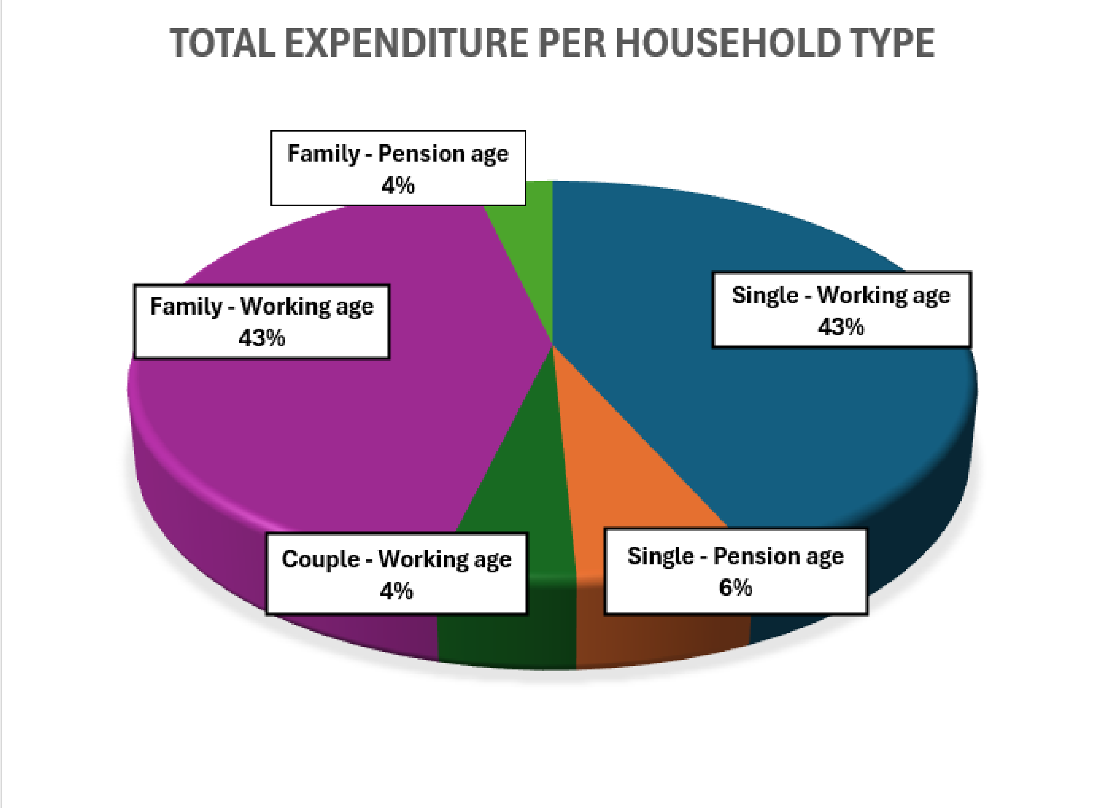
Discretionary Housing Payments

We continue to administer Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) to support tenancy sustainment, homelessness, and to support people to stay within the community.

For 2025/26, North Norfolk has been allocated funding of **£103,037.00**, and up to **31st October 2025** we have spent **57%** of our allocation across **67** households.

A breakdown of how the expenditure has been allocated across the 67 households can be seen below.

Household Type	Number of Households paid	Expenditure across households
Single - Working age	33	£ 25,638.29
Single - Pension age	3	£ 3,497.71
Couple - Working age	2	£ 2,673.11
Couple - Pension age	0	£ -
Family - Working age	27	£ 25,217.85
Family - Pension age	2	£ 2,146.43
Totals	**67**	**£ 59,173.39**



Crisis Resilience Fund (CRF)

The CRF is set to replace the Household Support Fund from **1 April 2026 and the Discretionary Housing Payment Scheme from 1st April 2028.** The aim is for multi-year certainty of funding (covering at least until 2028/29) rather than shorter funding bursts that were typical before.

The CRF will provide a safety net for those on low incomes who encounter a financial shock, whilst also investing in local financial resilience to enable communities to better deal with crises in the long-term, reducing dependence and repeat need.

The fund has 3 main outcomes:

- Provision of effective crisis support
- Improving individuals' and local communities' financial resilience
- Bolstering community level support

Key features of the fund include:

- £842m (£1bn including Barnett) per year, including admin costs.
- Scheme runs from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029.
- Funding provided directly to LAs via the Local Government Finance Settlement, which still retains local discretion in administration of LA's schemes.
- Consolidates multiple funding streams, enhancing the flexibility and autonomy of LAs to address local needs most effectively.

The DWP will be finalising the design of the CRF, ahead of publication of the scheme guidance in January. In the meantime, we will be starting transition planning, looking at potential scheme modelling, delivery, eligibility, and partnership opportunities.

Financial Inclusion (Pro-active) Delivery Plan

We are continuing to deliver our Financial Inclusion (Pro-active) Delivery Plan.

Council Tax Support take up campaign	This month we have launched a **Council Tax Support** take-up campaign whereby over 160 households have been contacted to advise of their potential entitlement to Council Tax Support.
Household Support Fund	We will shortly be preparing for the first tranche of targeted payments under the **Household Support Fund**, to support low-income vulnerable households with food, energy, and wider essentials over the Autumn/Winter months. A second tranche of targeted payments will be issued in January 2026.
Better Off Calculator	The Council is developing the **Better Off Calculator** (www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/apply), a digital tool for residents and officers to support financial planning and improve household financial resilience. The tool helps users create action plans, set goals, and prepare for changes in circumstances. Since April 2025, **69 households** have used the calculator, with **46 households** identified as having unclaimed benefits totalling **over £26,000**. This includes both households partially claiming benefits and those not claiming any. Data from the calculator will be cross-referenced with the **Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) Dashboard** to ensure missed benefits are claimed and households receive follow-up support. Household characteristics such as age, disability, number of children, tenure type, and employment status will inform targeted interventions. Engagement will be promoted through internal staff training, Council communications, and social media campaigns.
Pension Credit Awareness week	This year's Pension Credit Week of Action runs from **27 October to 2 November 2025**. We are helping to reach pensioners who may be eligible for, but unaware of, the extra support available to them through posters, social media, and website updates. We will also be running a Pension Credit take-up campaign shortly. https://www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/tasks/benefits/apply-for-pension-credit/

Housing Options and Homeless Prevention

Your Choice Your Home

The demand for social and affordable housing options remains high within the district and far exceeds the availability and supply. As at the 31 October 2025 there were 2,237 households on the housing list with (23%) being on the Housing Register – this register contains those qualifying applicants who have the most urgent housing needs, including homeless households and households living in Temporary Accommodation.

The Tables below highlight the make up of housing need and the size property that is required by applicants on the housing list. Although the greatest demand for housing is those with a 1-bedroom need, there are significantly fewer larger properties allocated with a current demand for 4 bed+ properties being 272 and year to date only 4, 4-bed properties have been let.

	Housing List by Bedroom Need				Homes Let by Property size (Bedrooms)			
	Housing Register	Housing Options	Transfer	Total	Housing Register	Housing Options	Transfer	Total
1 Bed	210	800	165	1175	64	2	1	67
2 Bed	114	400	89	603	63	4	9	76
3 Bed	71	86	38	195	32	1	3	36
4 Bed	88	104	35	227	4	0		4
5 Bed +	13	16	8	37	0	0		0
Total	496	1406	335	2237	**163**	**7**	**13**	183

Applicants on the Housing List as of 31 October 2025

Homes let April to October 2025

Age Restricted Properties

Some properties have a minimum age requirement, for example, in some cases only people over 55 years of age can apply, this applied to 32 (17%) of the properties let between 01 April to 31 October 2025.

Local Letting Agreements

Local Letting agreements supplement the general housing allocations scheme and refer to properties that have been built to meet the identified local needs of particular parish. If a property has local lettings criteria attached, preference will be given to the applicant who has the strongest local connection to that parish (and the adjoining parishes). This applied to 19 properties (18 general needs and 1 shared ownership) let between 01 April to 31 October 2025.

Changes to the Allocation Scheme

The re-registration process with existing members opened on the 27th

October. Existing members of the scheme were contacted to explain the process and were invited to complete a new online application form which will determine if they are still eligible based on the new criteria set out in the Allocation Scheme.

So far over 600 people have completed the re-registration process and are having their circumstances assessed against the new eligibility criteria.

We will be pausing the system to new applications between 27 October and 24 November. This is necessary as we need to be able to collect all the information needed to make an informed decision about someone's housing needs under the new scheme criteria.

Households Assessed and Duty Owed:

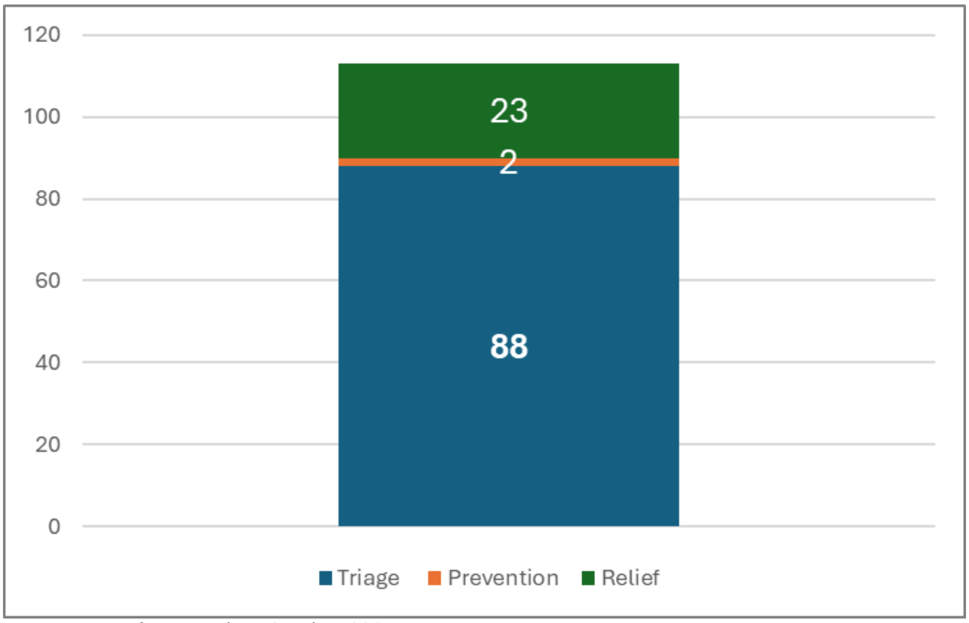
When a household becomes homeless, or at risk of homelessness, their local authority owes them a duty. There are three main types of homelessness duties:

1. Prevention duty: Local authorities owe prevention duties to help stop households at risk of homelessness losing their accommodation.

2. Relief duty: If a household is homeless, the local authority owes them a relief duty to provide some sort of accommodation.

3. Main housing duty

Approaches to the service are lower than previous months and during the month of October 2025 we have opened 126 new cases with 25 households being assessed as owed a statutory duty to prevent or relieve homelessness, of which 92% of households were already homeless.



Assessment of approaches October 2025

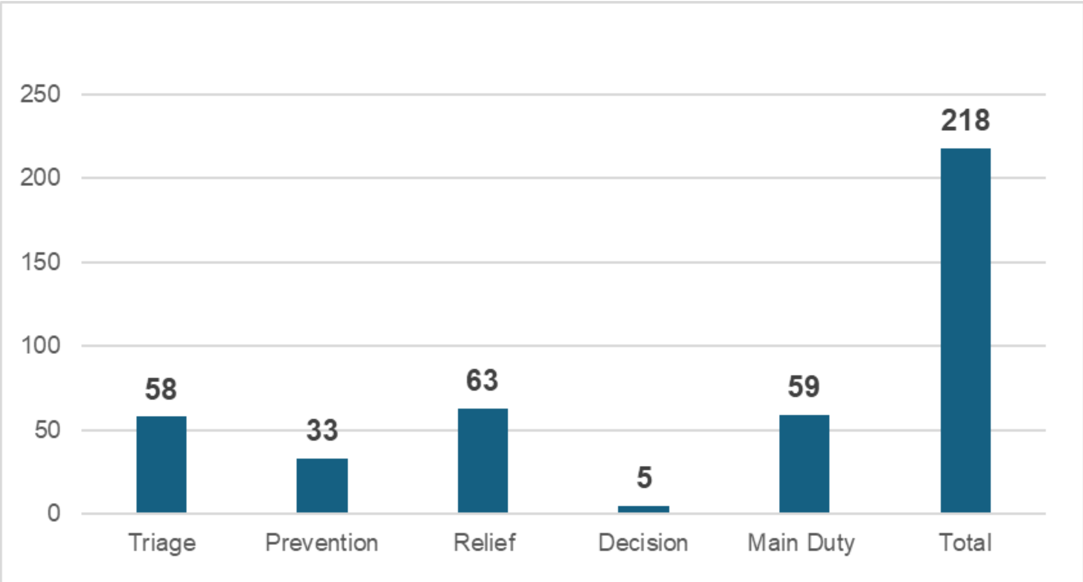
Causes of Homelessness

The three most common triggers of homelessness/loss of last settled home during the month were:

- Domestic Abuse (28%)
- Family/Friends no longer able to accommodate (28%)
- The loss of a private tenancy (15%)

Open Cases:

On the 31 October 2025 there were 218 open cases.



Outcomes of homelessness duties April to October 2025:

Where homelessness cannot be prevented or relieved a decision is taken to whether the applicant is owed the Main homelessness duty. This describes the duty a local authority has towards an applicant who is unintentionally homeless, eligible for assistance and has priority need. Households are only owed a main duty if their homelessness has not been successfully prevented or relieved.

Outcomes of homelessness prevention duties:

Of those households whose prevention duty ended in the period (April to October) 53% (54 households) secured (existing or alternative) accommodation for 6+ months and 30% (30 households) could not have their homeless prevented. Other reasons why cases are closed included contact being lost and applicant withdrawing application.

Outcomes of homelessness relief duties:

Of those households whose relief duty ended in the period (April to October) 21% (41 households) found secure accommodation and 64% (124 households) were still homeless.

Outcomes of homelessness main duty assessments

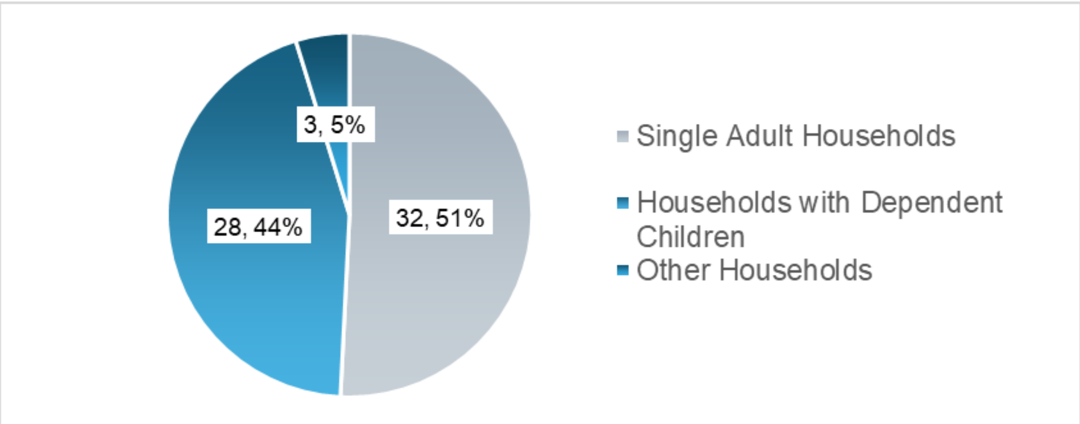
Where relief duty ended during the period, a main duty was owed in 122 cases. Of these 90 applicants were owed the main duty and found to be in priority need and not intentionally homeless.

Where a local authority has accepted main housing duty to an applicant, Section 193 accommodation duty arises. This requires the local authority to ensure that the applicant has access to suitable temporary accommodation until the applicant is rehoused and the Section 193 duty is discharged.

Between 01 April and 31 October 2025, we have discharged 84 main duty decisions with 72 applicants (86%) securing social housing, 4 applicants (5%) securing private rented accommodation. Other reasons why applications are closed include applicant withdrawing their application, becoming intentionally homeless from temporary accommodation or refusing a suitable offer of social housing.

Temporary Accommodation

On the 31 October 2025 there were 63 households in Temporary Accommodation. Households with dependent children made up 44% of placements and included 65 children.



30% of households were in Temporary Accommodation owed by North Norfolk District Council.

Nightly paid, privately managed accommodation (Shared facilities)	20

Nightly paid, privately managed accommodation (Self-contained)	21
Accommodation within NNDC stock	19
Accommodation within registered provider stock	3
Total	63

The table below looks at temporary accommodation numbers taken as a snapshot at the end of each month and provides a comparison with the previous year.

	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct
2025-26	64	62	59	54	54	60	63
2024-25	57	60	57	51	52	53	61

Rough Sleeping

During the month of October (at various points in time) 6 people were reported/verified as sleeping rough in North Norfolk. At the end of the month, 4 people remain sleeping rough in the district.

Housing Strategy

Temporary Accommodation

The Council now holds 29 units of Temporary or other homeless accommodation (including five units of move on accommodation for ex-rough sleepers). Value for money analysis of our in-house TA has concluded the homes do provide VFM, especially compared to expensive (and inferior) nightly paid accommodation.

The demand for TA continues and, with funding from the government's Local Authority Housing Fund grant (£588k) and Second Homes Council Tax premium, we are purchasing seven units of homeless accommodation in 2025/26. The LAFH was originally intended to deliver four homes, but we have increased this to seven through use of additional funding from Second Homes Council Tax. Four of these homes have already been purchased (included in the 29 above) and are now in use. A further two homes should complete shortly, and we aim to secure the remaining home in the next 2-3 months.

New Affordable Homes

We have a healthy affordable housing scheme pipeline, many of which are 'rural exception' housing sites at various points in the development process.

There are over twenty developments which will, subject to approvals, deliver more than 650 new affordable homes in the next few years.

Current schemes include:

Flagship Housing Association have submitted a planning application for 9 affordable homes in Pudding Norton at Green Lane.

Blakeney Neighbourhood Housing Society continue to work in partnership with Broadland Housing Association to deliver 8 affordable homes. The planning application has now been submitted and is expected to be determined soon.

Flagship Housing Association's planning application for an affordable housing scheme in Ludham continues to be considered, which subject to approval, will bring 26 homes for the local community.

New affordable homes continue to be let on the Park View development in Holt with a total of 28 expected to become new homes for those in housing need.

45 new affordable homes have completed so far, and we expect a total of 93 new affordable homes to complete in 2025/26. The forecast is 129 new affordable homes in 2026/27

Strategic Housing are currently working on the suitability of 15 early-stage sites. Further details will be reported on sites when these have progressed, and we start community discussions.

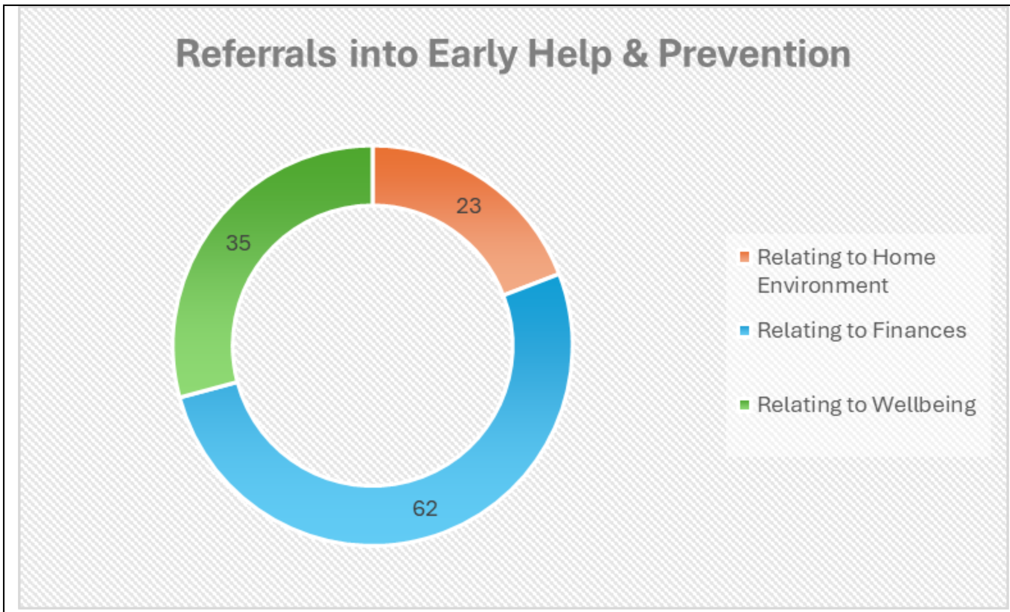
Social Prescribing

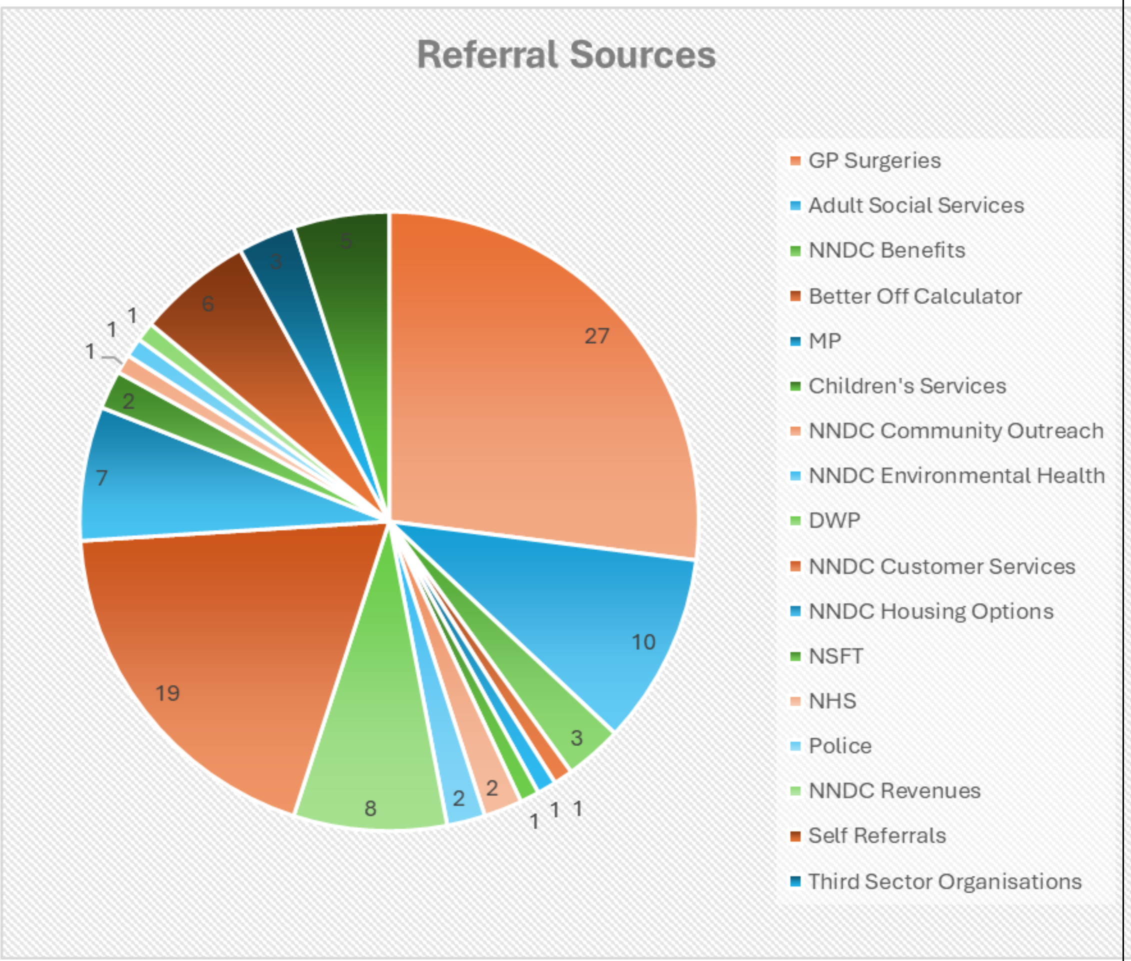
Early Help & Prevention

The Early Help and Prevention team has started to implement a new Case Management system from 1st October 2025. This will incorporate both Social Prescribing and Financial Inclusion. In time we will be able to record and retrieve much more detailed data about the referrals that are coming into the service, and we will be developing a Power BI dashboard to record this data.

From 1 – 31 October 2025:

TOTAL REFERRALS RECEIVED: 104





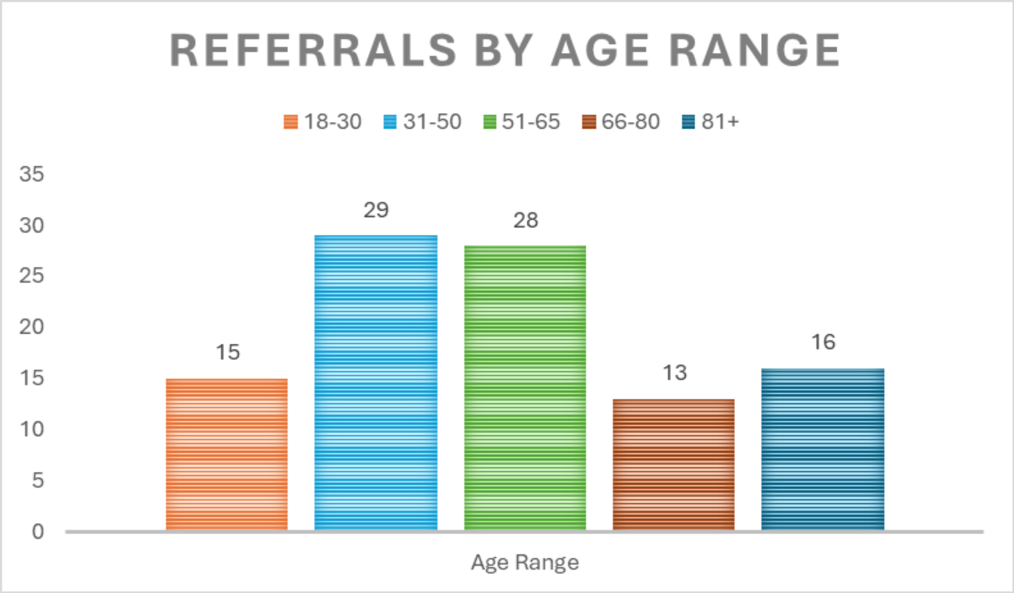
Financial Inclusion Case Study

Miss S has ME and had been put off applying for PIP because of past negative experiences. She was encouraged and supported to apply by a

Financial Inclusion Officer. Unfortunately, her initial claim was unsuccessful, however the Financial Inclusion Officer supported Miss S to request a reconsideration.

Miss S was successfully awarded both the Care and Mobility elements at the standard rate. This has increased her income weekly by £103.10.

In addition. She has received a backdated payment of PIP to the 2nd of February 2025. Council Tax Support was also reviewed, and this was awarded, gaining Miss S a further £15.20 per week, plus a backdated award.



Social Prescribing Case Study

Mrs R was referred into Early Help by a family member, with her consent. The family member had stated that she wanted to look at a care package for Mrs R, and some support with Social Isolation.

Mrs R is registered deaf and is also losing her sight.

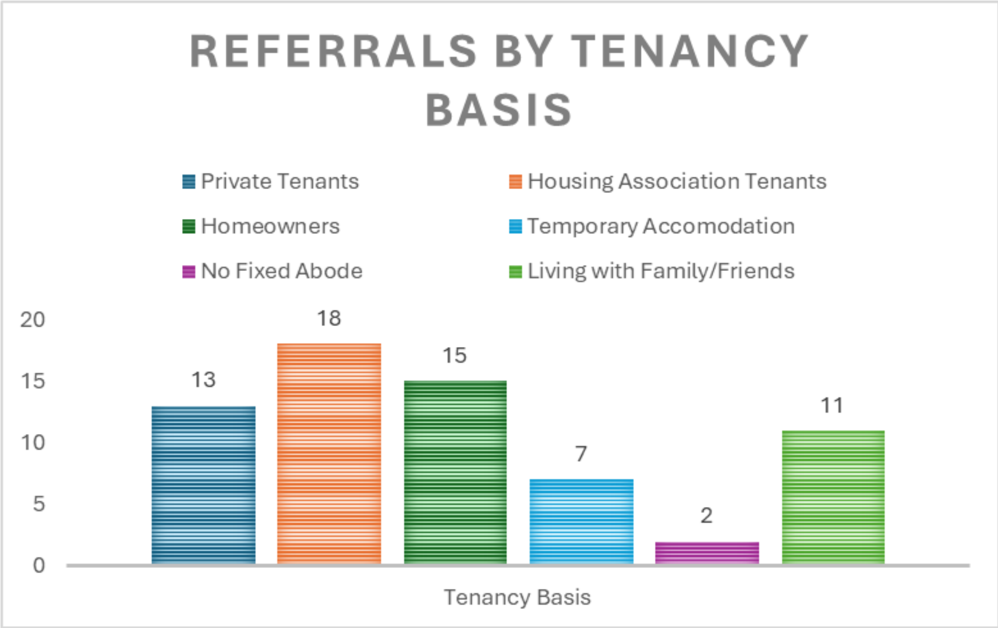
The Social Prescriber attended Mrs R's home to meet with her and her family member. The family member, although their intentions were clearly good, continually spoke over Mrs R and Mrs R became upset.

The Social Prescriber arranged for a visit on a second occasion and made sure to arrive earlier, so that she and Mrs R could speak one-to-one.

Mrs R reported feeling lonely. She didn't feel like she needed a care package yet but perhaps would benefit from some support with shopping and getting out and about.

Referrals and signposting took place and, as a result, Mrs R is now attending a day centre once a week to make social connections, and a local care service is providing support with shopping and accessing the community. Mrs R is also considering joining a seated exercise class.

"It's so nice to just be able to talk through my thoughts with someone, without being told what to do!"



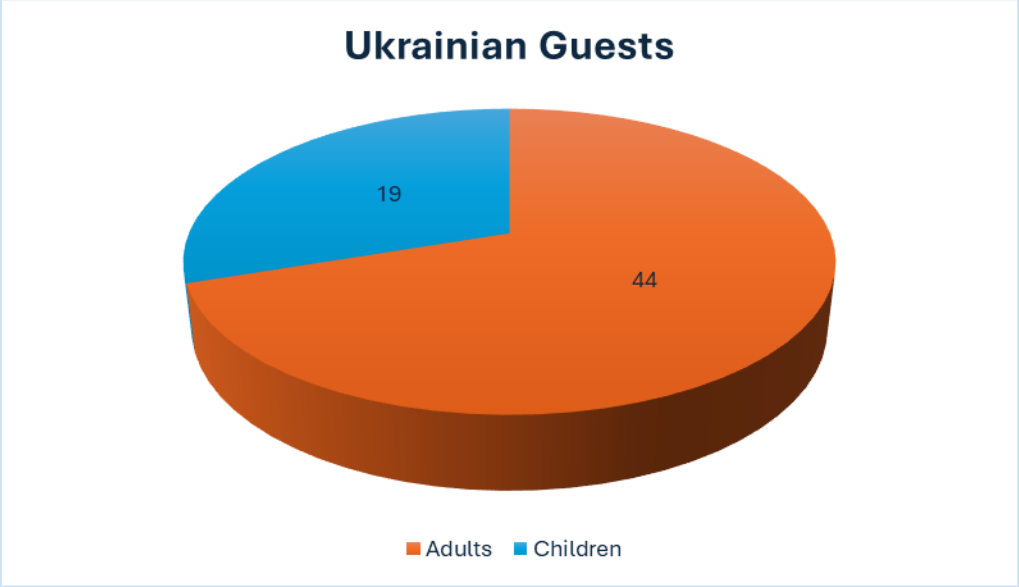
Number of Referrals where children live in the home:
25

In addition to the incoming referrals the service also deals with requests for emergency food and energy support.

For future reports we will be able to provide additional information about the number of requests for food and energy support.

Homes For Ukraine

There are currently 63 Ukrainian guests being supported in North Norfolk, of which 44 are adults and 19 are under the age of eighteen.



During October, our Ukrainian Support Officer has been supporting guests and families with making applications for visa extension, council tax support and tenancy support.

There have been some recent changes to Council Tax legislation for Ukrainian refugees, where Ukrainian Permission Extension Visa holders, who moved on from their hosts and switched from Homes for Ukraine visas, lost their disregards for Council Tax.

The Ukrainian Support Officer has been working with the Revenues team at NNDC to facilitate this.

IHAT

The Council has a statutory duty to provide financial assistance to those who qualify for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) to contribute towards adaptations which help them to safely access their home and the facilities within it.

The funding is provided as a capital grant from the government via the Better Care Fund. The government allocation for DFGs for 2025/26 minus 15% staffing top slice and the addition of £400,000 Covid underspend is **£1,797,681**. The actual spends, as of 31st October, including partially completed adaptations against the budget is **£704,330.59** in mandatory DFG's and **£71,407.25** in Discretionary Grants. A total of **£591.204.05** equating to 77 applications have been approved since April 2025.

Discretionary grants breakdown to date:

Waiver of assessed DFG contribution	1
Top up funding	2
Home repairs	6

Forget me not grant	1
Architects and surveyor fees	19
Fast track end of life grants	2
Minor adaptations grant	15

DFG assessment and recommendation snapshot year on year comparison.

Assessment numbers can fluctuate with demand, staffing availability and complexity.

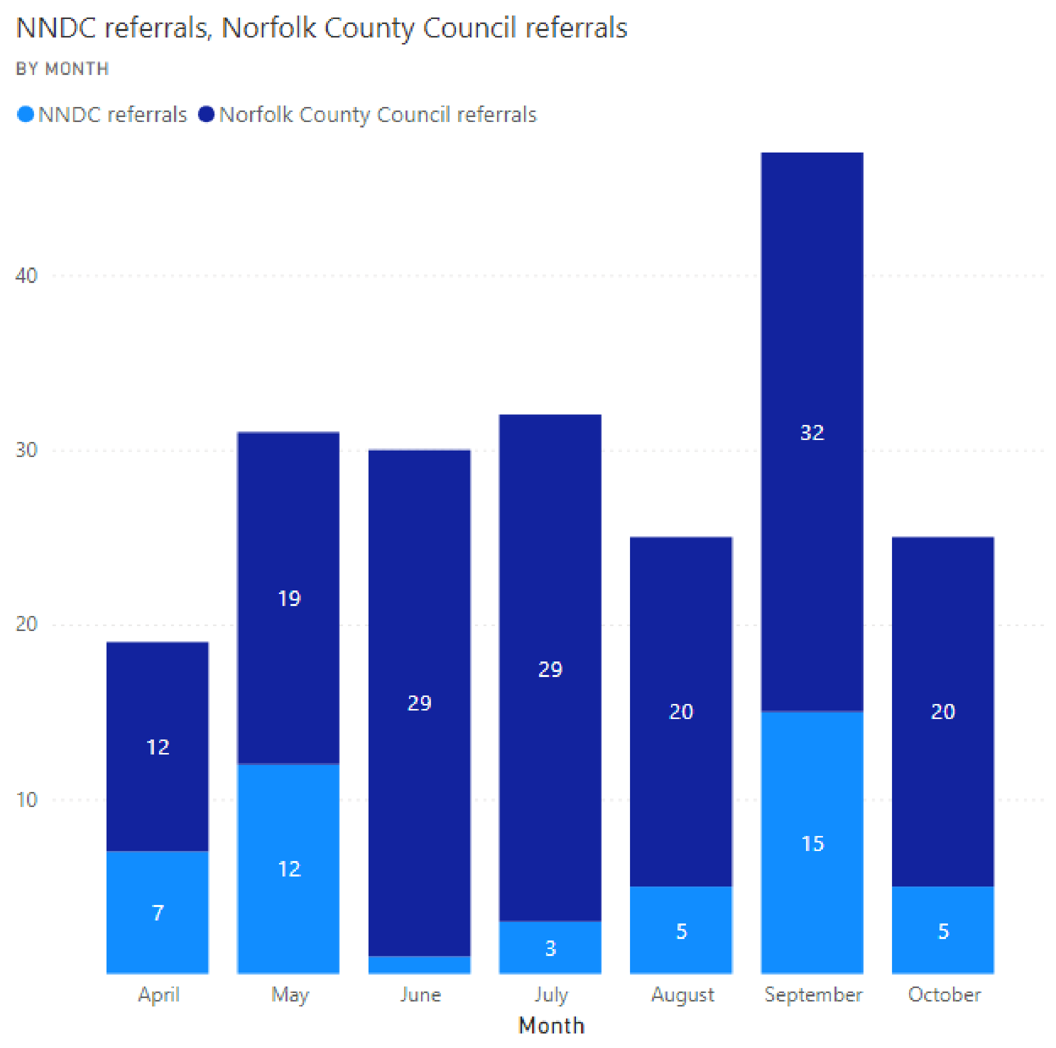
Assessment Completed	**2024**	**2025**
April	5	12
May	7	10
June	6	13
July	15	1
August	19	10
September	10	15
October	12	15

Recommendation Completed	**2024**	**2025**
April	12	16
May	7	16
June	5	13
July	26	14
August	18	8
September	18	14
October	14	18

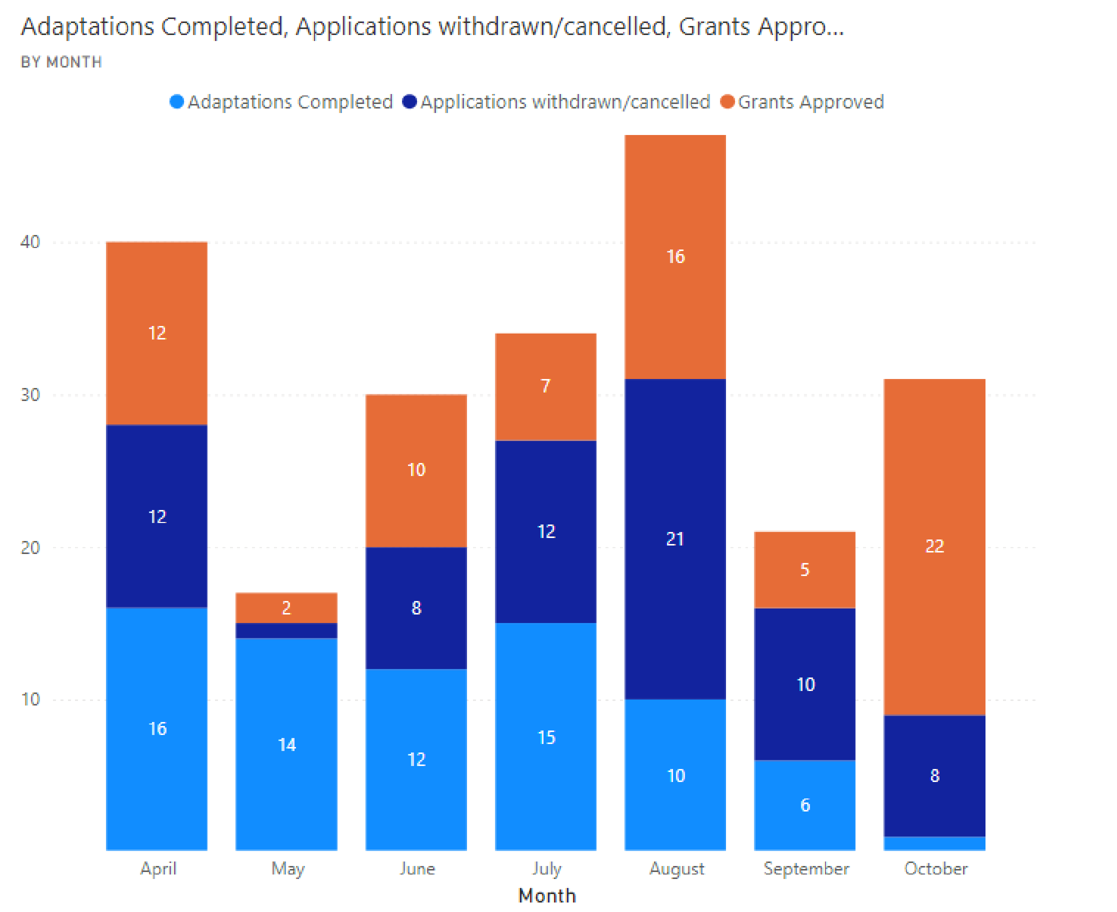
A breakdown of the DFG outcomes and demands is shown below.

The number of completed Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) can vary month to month due to the complex and multi-stage nature of the process, which depends on factors such as contractor availability, supply chain delays, resident circumstances, and the time lag between approval and completion; a low number in any given month often reflects earlier delays or seasonal factors, rather than a lack of activity or progress. Additionally, a grant cannot be formally recorded as completed until the final invoice is received and processed, which can further delay reporting even when works have finished.

Graph 1: number of referrals received

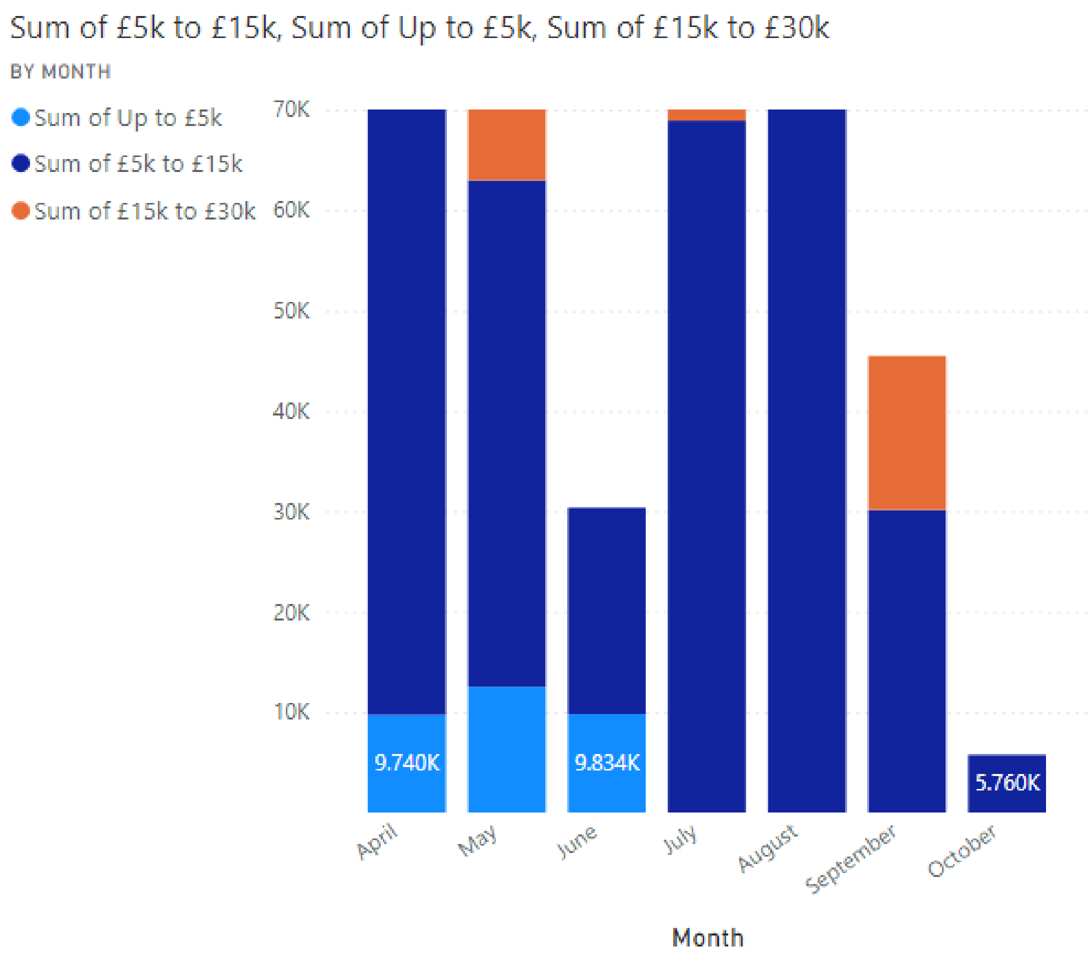


Graph 2: Outcomes of applications



Graph 3: Breakdown of DFG spend by amount

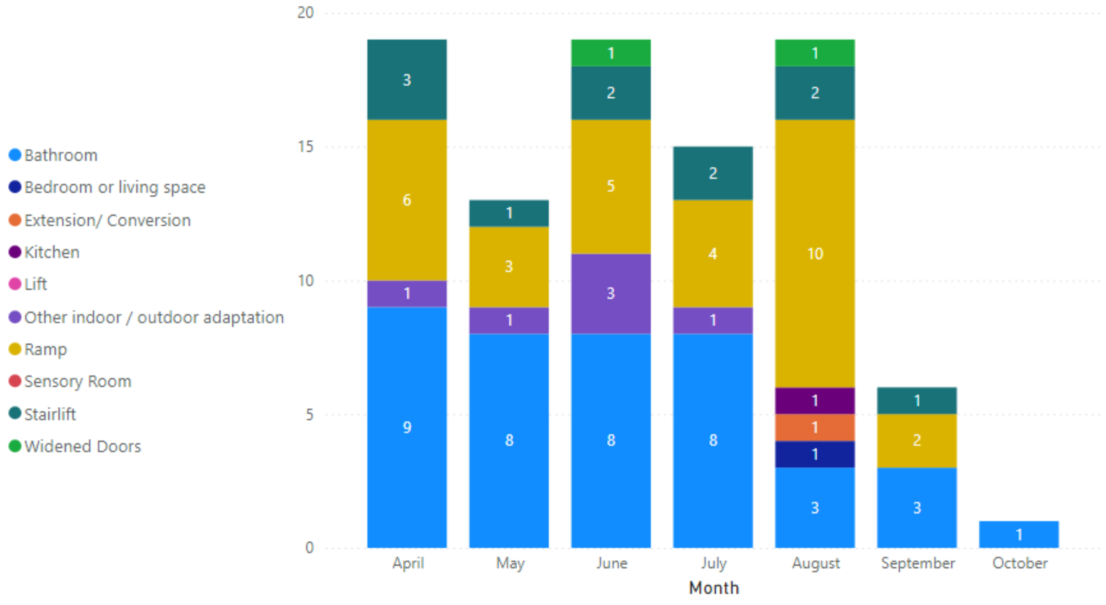
The below spend is calculated from completed DFG's. 'Completed DFG's' are when the work has been completed, the invoice has been received, the client is happy to sign off the work and the invoice is paid. Actual monthly spend is generally higher than competed work spends due to interval payments of DFG's and payment of works from the previous month.



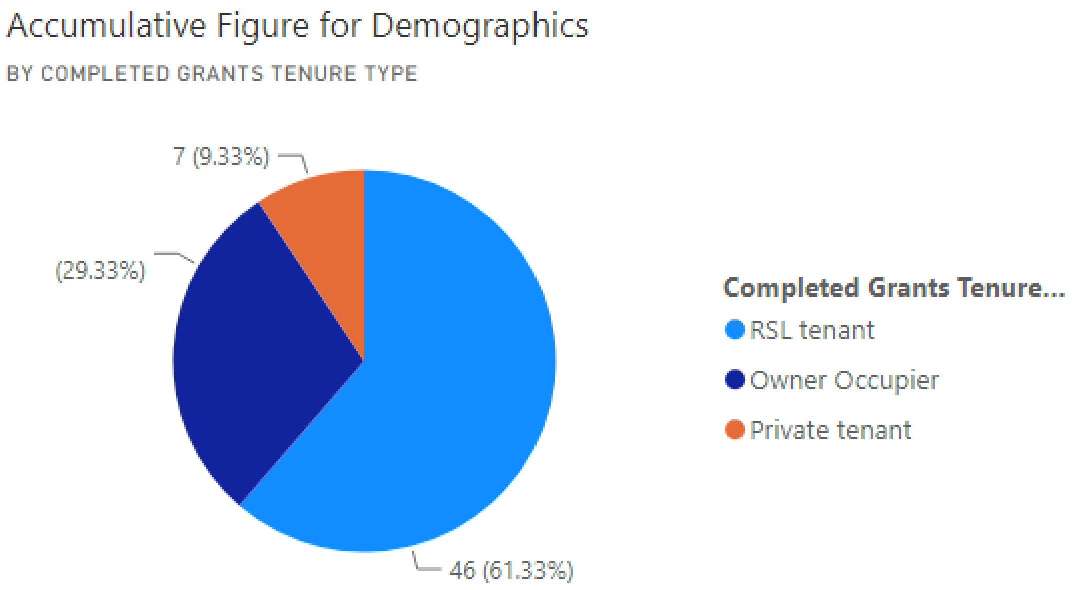
<u>A summary of how the funding has been used is shown below along with the demographics of clients</u>

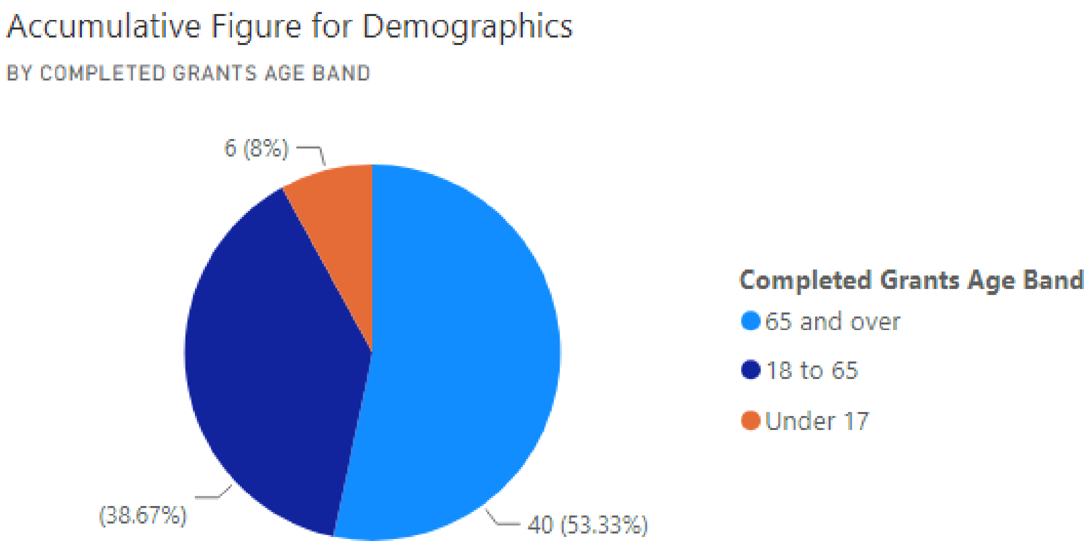
The figures of types of adaptations completed are higher than the monthly figures for completed DFG's. This is the result of holistic assessing and clients may require more than one adaptation. E.G. a stair lift is required as well as a level access shower.

Graph 4: Types of adaptations completed



Graph 5: Accumulative demographics of households receiving grants 25-26





Key Service Updates

Good progress with using discretionary grants for architects and top up fees. Two high-cost adaptations involving extensions have been completed from a list of cases that couldn't be progressed because of funding restraints. Three more cases are in progress and nearing completion.

Forthcoming Activities and Developments

DFG workshop with all Norfolk Districts to develop understanding of neurodivergent applicants and the adaptations required to meet their needs.

Meetings Attended

Ongoing IHAT weekly meetings to review and discuss DFG applications using the whole IHAT service expertise.

Six-weekly local delivery group meeting with partners of Norfolk County Council.

Ongoing meetings with architect, technical officers and OT for high-cost DFG projects and review of outstanding cases.

Ongoing monthly Flagship Housing Association meetings to maintain communication and progress cases as quickly and effectively as possible.

2	**Forthcoming Activities and Developments.**
3	**Meetings attended**